

frey R. Immelt, chairman and chief executive officer, General Electric Co., in his capacity as Chair of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness; Penny S. Pritzker, chairman and founder, Pritzker Realty Group, in her ca-

pacity as a member of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness; and Cass R. Sunstein, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs Administrator, Office of Management and Budget.

## Remarks at Cree, Inc., in Durham June 13, 2011

*The President.* Hello, everybody. Thank you, everybody. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you.

It is good to be back in North Carolina. It's great to be back at Cree. To all the employees at Cree, thank you so much for your outstanding work and hospitality. I actually visited this plant about 3 years ago. I was still running for office. Somebody in the plant showed me a picture of the two of us together, and I looked so much younger then. *[Laughter]* But—so I—it's true, I've got a lot more gray hair now than I did the last time I visited. But I have a better plane—*[laughter]*—so it's a fair trade.

Now, that day, a wonderful man gave me a heck of an introduction. He introduced himself by saying: "I am a Cree employee, and I help build the most energy-efficient LEDs in the world. That's what I do." And his name was David Jones. This—David's the guy with the picture. Where's David? David must be—there he is. David's back there. As you can see, David's shy—*[laughter]*—and lacks enthusiasm—*[laughter]*—but nevertheless.

So I got to see David on—looking at the new LED production line—which he now runs, by the way—and it's easy to see why you guys are so proud of what you do. This company has made amazing progress. And the technology at this company is growing in leaps and bounds. In fact, as I was talking to Chuck here at Cree, he was explaining, how just since my last visit, LEDs have become—how much more efficient have they become?

*Cree, Inc., President, Chief Executive Officer, and Chairman of the Board of Directors Charles M. Swoboda.* Twice—doubled in efficiency.

*The President.* Doubled in efficiency just since my visit 3 years ago—just since my visit 3 years ago.

So today, the small business that a group of NC State engineering students founded almost 25 years ago is a global company. It's got 5,000 employees. Next month, your new production line will begin running 24/7. And soon you'll add another 400,000 square feet of space on a new site next door. So you're helping to lead a clean energy revolution. You're helping lead the comeback of American manufacturing. This is a company where the future will be won.

So David was telling the truth when he said how great it is to work here and how grateful he is for the opportunities that it provides. But I also remember something else that David said that day. He talked about how, even with a good job at a great company, it was getting tougher for working people to provide for their families without having to cut corners.

What he said was, "Where I'm—where am I squeezing that balloon to make sure that my family has a life, that we're moving forward, that we're progressing?" Now, that was in 2008, before the financial crisis, before the bottom fell out of the economy, before a vicious recession that made things that much tougher for working families.

So the world has changed since the first time David and I met. And for a lot of our friends and neighbors, that change has been painful. Today, the single most serious economic problem we face is getting people back to work. We stabilized the economy. We prevented a financial meltdown. An economy that was shrinking is now growing. We've added more than 2 million private sector jobs over the last 15 months alone. But I'm still not satisfied. I will not be satisfied until everyone who wants a good job that offers some security has a good job that offers security. I won't be satisfied

until the empty storefronts in town are open for business again. I won't be satisfied until working families feel like they're moving forward again, that they're progressing again. That's what drives me every day when I walk down to the Oval Office: you, your families, your jobs, your dreams, and everything it takes to reach those dreams.

Now, our economic challenges were years in the making, and it will take years to get back to where we need to be. But for all the hits we've taken, we are still America. We've got the largest economy in the world, we've got the best workers in the world, we've got the finest universities in the world, we've got the most successful companies in the world. We've got everything we need to help our workers adapt and to help our fellow Americans through this tough period.

But it's going to take all of us working together: the private sector, government, non-for-profits, academia. And that's what I came back to Cree to talk about today. I brought some folks with me. I travel with a bigger entourage these days than I did 3 years ago. [Laughter]

So the group I brought today is a group called the Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. These are leaders who have decades of experience in running some of America's best businesses, creating jobs, understanding what it takes to grow our economy and strengthen our middle class. They come from the business sector, but also labor, universities. Most importantly, they come from outside Washington. And they've decided to dedicate their time and energy to this singular task: How do we create more jobs in America?

And by the way, we put this together many months ago, not in response to one jobs report, but because we understood even though the economy was growing, it wasn't growing as fast as we want, and it wasn't producing as many jobs as we want. And so I told them I wanted to hear every smart, forward-thinking idea that they have to quicken the pace of job growth and make sure our economy and our workers can adapt to changing times.

So we just had an opportunity to meet backstage to talk about how we get our job creation engine running faster, and I want to highlight a couple of their ideas that apply to companies like this, to companies like Cree.

Now, the advanced manufacturing that you do here requires skilled workers. And you guys are lucky; you've got excellent schools nearby, like UNC and NC State and Duke. Reggie, I—don't worry, I'm not forgetting Duke. [Laughter] Every time I come here, there's some ACC thing that I got to work through. [Laughter]

So—but because you've got these great schools, you can hold your own talent draft, not just in basketball, but when it comes to highly skilled workers. And Durham Public Schools has strengthened that talent pipeline by forming a school of engineering at Southern High School, which celebrated its first graduating class last week. And we are so pleased with that because we want more engineers in America.

Here's why this is so important. Right now there are more than four job seekers for every job opening in America. But when it comes to science and high-tech fields, the opposite is true. The businesses represented here tell me they're having a hard time finding high-skilled workers to fill their job openings.

And that's because today, only 14 percent of all undergraduate students enroll in what we call the STEM subjects: science, technology, engineering, and math. Of those students, one-third will switch out of those fields, and only about two in five will graduate with a STEM degree or certification within 6 years.

So these are the jobs of the future. These are the jobs that China and India are cranking out. Those students are hungry because they understand if they get those skills they can find a good job, they can create companies, they can create businesses, create wealth. And we're falling behind in the very fields we know are going to be our future.

So we can do better than that. We must do better than that. If we're going to make sure the good jobs of tomorrow stay here in America, stay here in North Carolina, we've got to

make sure all our companies have a steady stream of skilled workers to draw from.

So last year, in pursuit of this goal, we brought together companies and community colleges to forge pipelines directly from the classroom to the office or the factory floor, helping workers find better jobs and helping companies find the right workers. Last week, we announced new commitments by the private sector, as well as colleges and the National Association of Manufacturers, to make it possible for 500,000 community college students to earn industry-accepted credentials for manufacturing jobs that companies across America are looking to fill.

So what happens here now is businesses and trade organizations are going into the community colleges, helping to design the training for specific jobs that they know are going to be available, in some cases providing the equipment to help those students train on. The students then have an incentive. They know, you know what, if I do well here, I know I'm going to have a job.

And today, with the leadership of the jobs council, we're announcing an all-hands-on-deck strategy to train 10,000 new American engineers every year. So—[*applause*]—and by the way, our jobs council, led by Jeff Immelt, they're doing this not counting on a whole bunch of Federal funding. Private sector companies are teaming up to help us promote STEM education, to offer students incentives to finish those degrees, and then to help universities fund those programs. They're going to double their summer internship hiring.

We're talking about companies like Intel, whose CEO, Paul Otellini, is here today. And Paul is heading up our task force for the jobs council in helping to figure this out, because he understands Intel's survival depends on our ability to get a steady stream of engineers. I've been, by the way, to the Intel plant out in Oregon. It is unbelievable. It's out of—something out of science fiction. And I pretended like I understood what they were saying the whole time. [*Laughter*]

But that's what's going to drive our competitiveness in the future. We know that if we're

going to maintain our leadership in technology and innovation, our best companies need the world's brightest workers: American workers.

Now, that brings me to a second idea that we discussed backstage. At Cree, you're putting people back to work in a field that has the potential to create an untold number of new jobs and new businesses right here in America, and that's clean energy. And my administration has invested heavily in clean energy manufacturing, because I want to see the LEDs and solar panels and wind turbines and electric cars of tomorrow made right here in the U.S. of A. I want them made right here.

We invested in this company with a tax credit that allowed you to boost capacity and lower costs and hire hundreds of new workers. And with a grant from the Department of Energy, you've made incredible breakthroughs in smart grid technology to transmit clean, renewable energy across the country more efficiently at less cost.

Now, breakthroughs like these have the potential to create new jobs in other sectors of the economy as well. Think about it. Cree makes energy-efficient lighting that can save businesses and consumers a lot of money. And there are a lot of buildings out there that need upgrading. And there are a lot of workers ready to do the upgrades. Construction workers were hit harder than anybody by recession. Almost one in six construction workers are out of work. And that makes no sense at a time when we've got so much of America that needs to be rebuilt.

So this is what led us to create what we're calling the Better Buildings Initiative, putting people back to work doing the work that America needs done. Upgrading buildings for energy efficiency could save America's businesses up to \$40 billion a year on their utility bills, and obviously, that \$40 billion could be better spent growing and hiring new workers. It will boost manufacturing of energy-efficient products like those made here at Cree. It will put contractors and construction workers back on the job. It is a win-win-win-win proposition.

So today the members of my job council updated me on their efforts to push this initiative in the private sector. And they're working

closely with a champion for this kind of energy innovation, President Bill Clinton, who I asked to colead the effort with them.

And as we get this moving, it can snowball, because right now the big impediment is a lot of companies know they would save money if they had more energy efficiency, but they may not have the initial capital to do it. In some cases, building owners, they're thinking to themselves, well, if I put in all this new lighting, am I going to be able to recover it with—through the rents or the leases that I'm able to obtain? And so what we've got here are premier experts who are going to be able to help us design this program to really get this to take off.

Now, this is just two examples of the kind of work that's being done by the jobs council. They had all sorts of recommendations that they're talking about. How do we deal with making sure our regulations make sense so that we start eliminating ones that don't work, aren't making consumers better off, or aren't improving our quality of life? How do we make sure that small businesses get financing? Because there are a lot of small businesses out there that are still struggling to get capital. Large businesses are doing pretty well. So they're tackling a whole host of different issues.

Now, their recommendations aren't going to solve every problem that we face. But slowly, steadily, they're helping us to move forward. We're going to pursue these ideas and any good ideas that are out there, no matter where they come from. Because even though this is a big country with a great diversity of opinion—as you discover when you're President—[laughter]—we won't agree with each other on everything, we can agree on some basic things.

We can agree on educating our children and training our workers to be the best in the world. We should be able to agree on investing in the research and technology that leads to new ideas and new industries. We should be able to agree on developing clean energy and manufacturing jobs that come with it. It makes sense for us to rebuild our infrastructure and all the jobs that it

can create. That's what's going to be required to grow our economy. That's what it takes to help our people prosper. That's how we're going to get to the future that we dream about for our children and our grandchildren.

And the main thing I wanted to communicate to all of you here at Cree, everybody here in North Carolina, and all across the country is we're going to get there. I know that because I've seen it here at this company, where you're helping to lead the clean energy revolution. I've seen it across the Midwest, where automakers are coming back and hiring again, even after reading their own obituaries just 2 years ago. I've seen it from coast to coast, where men and women are testing new ideas and starting new businesses and bringing new products to market and helping America come back stronger than before.

So I am optimistic about our future. We can't be complacent. We shouldn't pretend that a lot of folks out there are not still struggling. But I am absolutely optimistic that we've got everything it takes for us to succeed in the 21st century. Americans do not respond to trials by lowering our sights or downscaling our dreams or settling for something less. We are a people who dream big, even when times are tough, especially when times are tough. We're a people who reach forward, who look out to the horizon and remember that together, there's nothing we can't do.

And as long as I have the privilege of being your President, I'm going to be right there with you, every step of the way, fighting for a brighter future in this community, in North Carolina, and across the United States of America.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:53 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love; and Jeffrey R. Immelt, chairman and chief executive officer, General Electric Co., in his capacity as Chair of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness.